number of such unfortunate incidents have taken place several times during the past;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government propose to evolve any such policy; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and by when?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (d) It is the policy of the Government of India not to compromise with terrorist groups or elements. However, while adhering to this principle, the objective of the Government is to ensure the safety and well-being of all its citizens , whether in India or abroad. In case of hostage-taking, Government makes all efforts possible to secure the early and safe release of its nationals. In order to deal with hostage situations, the Government have an institutionalized mechanism in place. There is a Crisis Management Group which is set up immediately and is tasked with the constant monitoring and handling of the situation in close consultation with concerned agencies, our diplomatic missions abroad and with foreign governments. The Cabinet Secretary also holds a parallel set of inter-ministerial meetings, as required, to take appropriate decision. The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs may also meet, as necessary, to review the situation and take appropriate decisions. This mechanism remains in force until the crisis ends. It needs to be pointed out that no two hostage situations are entirely similar and different responses may be required depending upon specific circumstances to reach the objectives of Government policy.

Irregularities in hiring accommodation for Haj Pilgrims-2004

743. SHRI MUKHTAR ABBAS NAQVI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about large number of irregularities committed by Consulate General of India in Saudi Arabia for hiring buildings in Makkah, Madinah and Mina for providing accommodation to Haj pilgrims during Haj 2004; and

(b) if so, the details of irregularities reported so far and the action taken by the Government to prevent such irregularities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) No irregularities were committed by Consulate General of India for hiring buildings for providing accommodation in Saudi Arabia to Indian pilgrims for Haj 2004.

(b) Does not arise.

Indo-Pak discussion on Hydro Carbon Sector

744. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan have discussed in the month of September, 2004 possible areas of co-operation in the hydro carbon sector;

(b) whether any discussions between the Petroleum Minister of India and the Petroleum Minister of Pakistan took place in this connection;

(c) if so, the details of the discussion and the outcome of the discussion;

(d) whether any proposal has been put forward by India in connection with exporting diesel from India; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (e) During their meeting in New Delhi on September 5-6, 2004 the External Affairs Minister of India and the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, recognizing the importance of availability and access to energy resources in the region around South Asia, had agreed that the Ministers of Petroleum/Gas of the two countries could meet to discuss the issue in its multifarious dimensions.

Subsequently, during their meeting in New York on September 24, 2004, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Musharraf had agreed to look at the possibility of a gas pipeline *via* Pakistan to India in the larger context of expanding trade and economic relations between India and Pakistan.